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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3134
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3246
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1673
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2507
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2876
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 3294
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5742
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2426
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000864

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: NGO DIRECTOR BEMOANS LACK OF PROGRESS IN ZIM

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Donald Petterson for reason 1.4
(b).

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), a local NGO, is joining with regional civil society organizations to pressure southern African governments to re-focus attention on Zimbabwe and the failures of the Global Political Agreement (GPA). RAU Director Tony Reeler also shared with poloffs his thoughts on how regional and grassroots mobilization could help the MDC focus its efforts toward bringing things right again in Zimbabwe. He warned donors to avoid directing too much money to the constitution-making process, which he believes is simply a ZANU-PF ploy to buy time before another flawed election. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) On October 20, poloffs met with the Executive Director of RAU and longtime political analyst Tony Reeler, who presented a sobering, but thoughtful analysis of Zimbabwe's current situation. He began by explaining RAU's programs, some of which are funded by USAID and/or the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). RAU runs three main programs: (1) A transitional justice program that has included a recent, thorough review of the voters' role; (2) a campaign to raise awareness of farm worker displacements, including production of the film "House of Justice" and an upcoming report on the issue; and (3) a campaign aimed at exposing sexual violence against women, and providing social support and counseling to victims of violence. As a part of this third program, a documentary called "Hear Us" on sexual violence during the 2008 election campaign will be shown at a film festival in New York in the coming weeks. RAU also has a non-publicized project on economic crimes, patronage, and corruption in Zimbabwe and the region that has uncovered evidence of money laundering and sanctions busting, but is in need of roughly US\$40,000 funding for further investigation.

Political Advice for the MDC

13. (C) Like many in civil society, Reeler bemoaned the MDC's clumsy political missteps, underestimation of ZANU-PF, and lack of political forethought. He said that the MDC's focus on parliament and regional heads of state to combat ZANU-PF policies demonstrates a lack of creativity. Rather, he said, the MDC should take the struggle to communities across Zimbabwe, where MDC enjoys wide support, and seek to undermine ZANU-PF politically. Because so many of the MDC's leaders are in government, Reeler explained, no one has been able to effectively lead the MDC as a party. The MDC Secretary General, who should be lobbying regional political parties to garner greater political support, is Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, who is already overwhelmed by the task of restoring order to Zimbabwe's economy. As the MDC is struggling to run government, ZANU-PF is sitting back and regrouping in preparation of upcoming political battles, including elections.
Qincluding elections.

14. (C) Reeler also explained that the MDC can and should do more to launch an aggressive campaign to raise awareness of the GOZ's recent decision to pull out of the SADC tribunal after it ruled in favor of 78 white farmers who faced eviction from their farms. The MDC could capitalize on this to point out ZANU-PF's repeated disdain for international bodies and treaties, but instead has remained relatively silent.

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Donors: Spend More on Communities,
Less on the Constitution,
Hammer the Benchmarks,
and Add Sanctions

15. (C) Reeler lamented the lack of coordination among civil society organizations to effectively organize and lobby regional civil society organizations to pressure their own governments on the Zimbabwe issue. He also believed that more should be done to empower local communities to prevent, document, and stop violence in their own communities.

16. (C) Turning to the constitution-making process, Reeler criticized donors (the USG included) for expending significant funding and attention on what he described as "nonsense politics." Reeler believes that ZANU-PF will make good on its repeated assertion that it will not give up power, and that ZANU-PF's hardliners will not allow the constitution-making process to produce a democratic document. Rather, he said, ZANU-PF was using the process as a distraction to allow time to reconsolidate and to re-stock coffers exhausted by the 2008 elections in order to prepare for another election that it would win -- through violence. Reeler opined that if donors sought proposals on community empowerment rather than a litany of civil society workshops on the constitution, communities would be better equipped to prevent a violent election campaign when the time comes. Although ZANU-PF had become much weaker financially, it was still strong enough to come back. "We cannot get rid of ZANU-PF until we weaken it enough to bring it to its knees."

17. (C) Reeler praised the so-called "benchmarks" that donors had previously set forth as prerequisites for Zimbabwe to re-engage with the West. However, he said, many in government had forgotten or ignored the benchmarks. He advised us and others to continue to reiterate the changes Zimbabwe needs to make, particularly the need for media freedom.

18. (C) On sanctions, Reeler encouraged us to add individuals to the OFAC sanctions list. Significantly, Reeler agreed to share with us a complete copy of the voters' role of

Zimbabwe, which would provide us with birth dates of all potential candidates for financial sanctions.

COMMENT

[19](#). (C) Reeler is a longtime civil society leader and he presents a thoughtful, albeit critical, analysis of how the MDC, donors, and civil society can work more effectively towards bringing democracy to Zimbabwe. We agree with his assessment that the MDC can and should do more to mobilize its grassroots support, but such action may be more difficult than Reeler implies. Communities remain traumatized by 2008 election violence, and many will not be willing to openly identify themselves with the MDC as long as violence perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity. END COMMENT.

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